

## Towards a fifth cinema

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## **Towards a Fifth Cinema**

**Raminder Kaur and Mariagiulia Grassilli**

***Third Text* article, 2018**

**INSERT FIGURE 1 at start of article**

*I met a wonderful Nigerian Ph.D. student, Tony Adah, at the documentary conference at this university two years ago. I asked him, "Tony, do you think there can be such a thing as a Fourth Cinema?" He laughed. He said, "Of course there can. And a fifth, and a sixth, and maybe a twentieth as well." I agreed at the time. It was a great vision. But today I am talking more fundamentally. I am talking major categories. I am talking genus. There may be a fifth and sixth category one day, but we are yet to find them.*

(Barry Barclay at Auckland University Film and Media Studies Department, 2002)<sup>1</sup>

*"I exist because I film" says Sidibe at one point, taking solemn pleasure in capturing the transitory lifestyle that he and the other migrants lead while striving for something better. By doing so, he delivers us a testament to their courage and the rest of the world's neglect – a sort of found footage movie that, true to the genre, is not one without its own horror: one that is real and is happening just outside our door. (Jordan Mintzer, 2016)<sup>2</sup>*

As stateless people with lost homes behind them, temporary homes in the making, and desired homes spurring them on, the filmic outputs of refugees stand apart from other cinematic genres.

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<http://www.maoricinema.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BarclayCelebratingFourthCinema.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Mintzer, *Those who Jump (Les Sauters)*. *Berlin Review*, 2016

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/who-jump-les-sauteurs-berlin-866147>

Even though exterior features may show certain overlaps with other kinds of cinema, they have a distinct orientation. Emotionally and politically fraught, it is emergency cinema, getting unheard voices out there, powered by extraordinary talent and vision. It feeds into, as T J Demos puts it, ‘an emergent and strategic engagement of artists to critically and aesthetically document’ the crisis conditions of this current world - a world of militarised borders, hypernationalism, xenophobia, and uneven political economies within and between the global north and south.<sup>3</sup> By no any means a concerted social movement, it is certainly about reflecting on the surge of individual movements and their filmic outputs, occasionally collective as the result of shared endeavours and co-productions. As a multifaceted spectrum of films made by or with the active participation of refugees, we define their outputs as *Fifth Cinema*.

Fifth Cinema is a mobile, unstable, instantaneous, fragmented, displaced, and hybrid bricolage. A ‘smart cinema’, owing to the prevalence of digital technologies, it exists in dispersed pockets. It is the expression of new creative modes of what Demos has described as ‘mobilising images’ and of ‘imagining mobility’ with which artists and filmmakers track the increased movements of life across the globe.<sup>4</sup> But it goes beyond that: as a ‘nomadic cinema’, it is associated with the life of precarity led by stateless, marginal and disenfranchised people, otherwise voice-/imageless in national mainstreams. As much as it serves as their representation in the audio-visual sense, it is also a call for their representation in the political sense.<sup>5</sup> Fifth Cinema therefore compels social action.

Migrants and refugees’ physical movements across the globe are here seen as acts of resistance against militarised borders – fragmented and yet connected through movement, they demonstrate a global march at great risk to their physical safety, where bodies might drown in

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<sup>3</sup> T J Demos, *The Migrant Image*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2013, p xv

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Dudley, ‘*The Roots of the Nomadic. Gilles Deleuze and the Cinema of West Africa*’ in Gregory Flaxman, *The Brain is the Screen. Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000

seas or dehydrate in deserts as the ultimate form of protest. As Alessandro Monsutti states, if ‘mobility by migrants is a “political act” – a forced and forceful human movement that upset our specific world order’<sup>6</sup>, then we propose that Fifth Cinema is ‘the art form’ that captures these global protests. In Deleuzian terms, Fifth Cinema is ‘art as an act of resistance’.<sup>7</sup>

As such, cinema can provide a powerful and effective vehicle of counter-information. Following Third and Fourth Cinema outlined below, it too can be seen as ‘a cinema of subversion’.<sup>8</sup> It proposes a discursive relation between art and activism, aesthetic and politics, to be defined variously by the practitioners involved. As a broad aesthetic of resistance, it subtly or stridently rallies against unequal economic power and unjust global politics that are at the source of their forced human flows, whether it be due to conflict, war, persecution, inequitable distribution of resources, extreme poverty or climate change.

As with any attempt to define a genus, there are always films that do not quite fit, or exceptions to our attempt to detail Fifth Cinema. But the socio-political phenomenon of forcible movement and draconian containment of stateless people is a very real one that has reached unprecedented levels. What we propose then is a conceptual, methodological, ethical and political space, an ‘open corpus’ to appreciate and consolidate a current that defines our neoliberal millennial era. This is a time when, on the one hand, millions are on the move, forcibly displaced, many of whom have access to mobile technologies, some of whom want to record and create their stories in the digital era that we inhabit. On the other, it is a time characterised by mainstream media and educational curricula that fails to fully appreciate refugees’ contributions to society, and where ‘myopic nationalist interests, and populist politics [that] thrive on strongman politics and the bulwarking of borders across the world’ have come

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<sup>6</sup> Alessandro Monsutti, statement at 2018 UCL conference *Engaging Refugee Narratives*.

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Che cos’è l’atto di Creazione*, 1987-2010, Cronopio, p. 23-24,

<sup>8</sup> See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. Routledge, New York and London, 1994

up trumps.<sup>9</sup> This is a consensus that has become hegemonic to the point that it has also begun to affect the views of long-term migrant communities who have already acquired citizenship in the host nation.

In this article, we first examine the empirical evidence for Fifth Cinema in the contemporary era before proceeding to our more theoretical argument that examines the precedents and potentials of this cinema thereby placing it at the heart of film-making history. We begin the first section by outlining refugee movements and mainstream audio-visual representations of them, demonstrating the need for counter-narratives. We then provide a brief overview of footage produced for cinema and social media by or with refugees, some of which fruitfully exemplify the main features of Fifth Cinema.

In the second section, we go on to compare the aesthetic and political components of Fifth Cinema in comparison to related media such as Third and Fourth Cinema. Picking up on these strands, we end by making a call for recognising the especial nature of Fifth Cinema by, and with the active involvement of stateless people, and how we may foster it for the future with approaches to do with refugees either ‘speaking for themselves,’ or for us to ‘enable and speak nearby or together’.<sup>10</sup>

Our key questions are: how can we draw out Fifth Cinema as a conspicuous yet open corpus of films? How can it channel the insights of their everyday lives, and provide expressive fora for the diverse skills of those displaced? And how can we enhance its advocacy role in the contemporary context, where stereotyping, racism, and anti-immigrant populist slogans dominate public discourse, influencing government decisions at all levels?

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<sup>9</sup> Raminder Kaur ‘Skipping Memories on Partition and the Intersensory Field in Subcontinental Britain’, *Third Text*, vol 31, 2017, Issue 2-3, pp 387-418, p.418

<sup>10</sup> See Minh-ha cited in Nancy N Chen ‘Speaking Nearby: A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha’, *Visual Anthropology Review*, 1992, vol 8, no 1, pp 82-91

Before we start, a brief word on our terms of reference is in order. We see refugees as first and foremost creative contributors to multifaceted and interconnected socio-cultural worlds. We appreciate that refugee identities are inflected by not just national identities, but also intersected by gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, among other aspects of identities. There may be categorical differences between the migrant, refugee and the asylum-seeker – the former a person who is on the move from one region to another that may not simply be due to forcible displacement as applies to the refugee, the latter a person who is in the process of applying for asylum at their destination - and these may vary from country to country, context to context, person to person.<sup>11</sup> These terms are contingent as much as they are transitory and confused in the public imaginary. Essentially, the cinema that we consider is with regards to the person who is migrating and holds a liminal and transitory status in the region of his/her residence(s). We also appreciate that displaced people may not even identify with the term *refugee* - hence our preference for Fifth rather than Refugee Cinema. However, rather than abandoning the term altogether, we want to revisit and reconceive it. Our overriding goal is to overturn associations of the ‘bare life’ of refugee status, the object of the gaze, to ones where they can be seen as resourceful and creative contributors, and (co-)producers of their own representations through the audio-visual mode.<sup>12</sup>

### **(In)securities and Representations**

More refugees are moving than ever recorded before as war, persecution and poverty continues to drive people from their homes. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2017 there were 65.6 million people who were forcibly displaced,

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<sup>11</sup> See Richard Black, *Fifty Years of Refugee Studies: from Theory to Policy*. IMR, vol 35, no 1, Spring 2001, pp 57-78

<sup>12</sup> On bare life, see Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998; and its development in Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz, eds, *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2010, p 46

internally and transnationally. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 17. One in every 113 people in the world is currently either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum. Some refugees might escape the net of statistics as they do not register with authorities, and/or avoid camps to settle in nearby towns, in order to regain a sense of autonomy and independence. Despite the perception of an ‘invasion’ to Europe, the majority of refugees are hosted in Africa and the Middle East, with Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Uganda and Ethiopia the top hosting countries. European countries host just 17% of the world’s refugees.<sup>13</sup> Leaving vulnerable populations behind including women and children is to risk them being subject to greater violence, labour and/or sexual exploitation. This is to add to the enxtities they endure as they live in relative isolation and melancholia while cases continue to drag on for years.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the rise of Islamophobia spurred by widespread terror attacks particularly in Western cities, mainstream media and policy makers have turned their focus away from humanitarian issues to those based on national security. Fortress Europe, post-EU referendum Britain, and Donald Trump’s America, for instance, are further securing their borders against migrants and refugees, with the justification that this would ward off terrorist threats. This is despite the fact that most attackers have not been refugees or recent migrants but ‘domestic extremists’ of all shades. Still, new walls and barbed fences continue to be erected (like those built by Hungary at the border with Serbia or by Bulgaria alongside Greece and Turkey). Just as rabidly, renewed bureaucratic and/or psychological barriers against those seeking asylum are raised. Nevertheless, come what may, refugees are still (t)here.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>, see also World Migration Report 2018, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), <https://www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018>

<sup>14</sup> See Ruba Al Akash and Karen Boswall 2014 ‘Listening to the Voices of Syrian Women Refugees in Jordan: Ethnographies of Displacement and Emplacement’. Conference paper – Refugee Voices 2014, Refugee Studies Centre (RSC), Oxford

The routes of ‘illegal’ entry into any country are various and change accordingly to the sites of conflict, the tightening of security measures at the border, and networks of information and risks perceived by refugees on the trails.<sup>15</sup> Most shocking are policies that serve to jeopardise lives – whereby, for instance, Italy, with the support of their Mediterranean counterparts, curtail SOS operations in the sea so as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) operating in this capacity are treated as aids to ‘illegal migration’; and the Lybian Coastal Guard repel boats back to North Africa where migraters undergo systematic violence, torture and slavery in indefinite detention. Their treatment in and around Europe is yet just one small slice of the global picture on forcible displacement and emplacement across the world.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the wave of imagery that envelop our screens, particularly during times of declared emergencies, refugee self-representations are scarce in the media, nationally and globally. News broadcasters tend to dwell on sensationalist images of them struggling throughout their journeys; embroiled in skirmishes as they fight for their rights to enter a safe and secure land; their precarity yet resilience on overcrowded boats; huddled around transport hubs or on coastal rocks and border refugee camps; dead refugees as their bodies lie washed up ashore (including the powerful image of the one Syrian child that momentarily roused many towards a call for humanity and the campaign to #welcomerefugees); or indeed, at one period in 2015, images of cheerful refugees as they reach their destination, and were unexpectedly welcomed in Germany or Canada. They are largely viewed through the lens of a screening and objectifying binary: dehumanised as victim, and/or criminalised as aggressor or threat.<sup>17</sup> As Karin Sohler et al.

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<sup>15</sup> See Russel King, Richard Black, Michael Collyer, Anthony Fielding and Ronald Skeldon, *The Atlas of Human Migration: Global Patterns of People on the Move*, Earthscan, London, 2010

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.therefugeeproject.org/>

<sup>17</sup> Relevant here are the provocations raised by Yosefa Loshitzky in her book, *Screening Strangers: Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2010. The title refers to the act of screening (as in putting on screen, representing in cinema), and migrants that are also screened (as in filtering the desired and



elaborate, there is a ‘double victimisation’ that oscillates around the idea that refugees are needy and therefore warrant pity, or that they are a threat to the status quo and therefore can only be subject to accusation.<sup>18</sup> The individual refugee hero/ine is one departure from this pity-accusation binary, but the narrative is in the mode of the exceptional. Refugees in news and documentary footage largely provide an ‘outsider point of view’ – that is, visual representations are not made by the refugees themselves, or produced with their fully engaged participation. Overwhelmingly, refugees become like ‘exotic mannequins’ that are slotted and framed into an audio-visual report as validation of another producer’s intent.

### **Who and what is out there?**

There are, of course, exceptions to the general observation of mainstream representations where creative practitioners have took to the battle of challenging dominant imagery and stereotypes.<sup>19</sup> These range from participatory artistic projects to those where non-refugee practitioners have striven to represent refugee interests and stories to the extents that they can, to those digital and filmic ventures that are primarily led by people who are displaced.

Participatory arts is now a well-sanctioned means with which to build communication and bridges between refugees and asylum-seekers and host communities.<sup>20</sup> Several projects have

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the undesired) by an array of institutions within Fortress Europe, reflecting the rise of surveillance societies fixated with controlling its borders.. As Loshitzky argues, ‘this instrumental approach to human lives explains the prominence of the screening metaphor in elite political discourse on migration, as well as in media and public responses to it.’ Loshitzky, *Screening Strangers*, op cit, p 2

<sup>18</sup> Karin Sohler, Herbert Langthaler, Selma Muhič Dizdarevič and Helene Trauner, ‘Refugees and Asylum Seekers as Civic and Political Actors in European Asylum Regimes’, *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*, Vol. 4, no 2, 2009, p 49

<sup>19</sup> See Raminder Kaur, ‘Dramas of Diaspora’, *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 2000, vol 17, no 2, July-Dec, pp 343-363

<sup>20</sup> Apart from studies on participatory theatre with refugees, the extant literature rarely demonstrates a participatory and engaged approach to refugee subjects as potential co-producers of filmic representations, and thus creative agents in their own rights. We return to this question of participatory ethnographic film with respect to the literature below. On the

been developed with NGOs and artists to encourage refugees to express themselves through participatory arts and media. Digital storytelling and participatory video practices have been advocated by InsightShare as a rights-based approach to fully collaborate with refugees in the creative process as well as the final product.<sup>21</sup> Witness is another non-profit organisation that seeks to place the tools of representation in the hands of those represented.<sup>22</sup>

Some film-makers, visual activists, and journalists are themselves in the field facilitating refugees to tell their own stories, collecting direct images and reportage. *Borderline* and *Welcome to Italy* – two web series of six five minute episodes each – are two such projects by Stefano Liberti (2016) in collaboration with other filmmakers, funded by Open Society, and

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others arts with refugees, see Erene Kaptani and Nura Yuval-Davis, 'Participatory Theatre as a Research Methodology: Identity, Performance and Social Action Among Refugees', *Sociological Research Online*, 2008, vol 13, no 5/2,

<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/5/2.html>; Belinda Kidd, Samina Zahir and Sabra Kahn, *Arts and Refugees: History, Impact and Future*, Hybrid, Birmingham, 2008, pp 62-63,

[www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/artsandrefugees.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/artsandrefugees.pdf); Mara Lockowandt, *Inclusion Through Art: An Organisational Guideline to Using the Participatory Arts with Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, 2013, pp 93-98,

<http://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org/sites/default/files/InclusionThroughArt2013.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> [http://learningunlimited.co/files/InsightShare\\_Participatory\\_Video\\_for\\_Integration.pdf](http://learningunlimited.co/files/InsightShare_Participatory_Video_for_Integration.pdf)

See for instance, these Insightshare work on refugees women:

[http://www.insightshare.org/watch/video/london-refugee-womens-forum-asylum-human-](http://www.insightshare.org/watch/video/london-refugee-womens-forum-asylum-human-right.html)

[right.html](http://www.insightshare.org/watch/video/london-refugee-womens-forum-asylum-human-right.html)

<sup>22</sup> 'The mission of the WITNESS project is to train and support individuals fighting for human rights through the use of technology, specifically *video*. Their slogan, "See it. Film it. Change it", refers to their efforts to teach individuals the basic of video production so that they are better able to rise above critical at-risk situations', cited in a Case Study in Meghan Mahoney and Tang Tang, *Strategic Social Media: from Marketing to Social Change*, Wiley, Indianapolis, 2017, p 259, emphasis in original

Another exemplary and impactful film is *In the Image: Palestinian Women capture the Occupation* (2014) where the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, worked with women using video as a way to capture daily human rights violations in their villages. Their videos were then uploaded on to YouTube by B'Tselem's Camera Project in Jerusalem. The footage went viral, was admitted as evidence in Israeli courts, and resulted in the convictions of abusive soldiers and their superiors. Due to their systematic repression, Palestinians are close to being refugees in their own land.

promoted by the weekly magazine, *Internazionale*. Their aims are to share insights on refugee experiences at the border gates into Europe and once arrived in Italy.<sup>23</sup>

*Borderline* is a reportage of journeys through militarised closed borders across the Mediterranean and the Balkans that reject human beings escaping from conflicts and persecution. *Welcome to Italy* was filmed in several reception centres across the country with the aim to gather insiders' views from within the asylum protection system. The filmmakers try to go beyond expected representations of refugees by engaging both participants' and audience' imagination in a productive and ethical manner so that we do not just have realist documentary. Instead, the films include powerful music, poems, dreams, fantasies and ambitions. By going beyond the impartation of information alone, the filmmakers side-step the binary discourse of 'deserving' and 'non-deserving' refugees. Simultaneously, by showing the difficulties they have to go through in getting a fair hearing, asylum status or through the 'welcoming' process, the films highlight the hostility that protectionist countries have against them. Viewed as inherently criminal trespassers, they are deemed guilty before they can even prove their innocence.

Jason Wingard is another filmmaker who produced a non-conventional film with and about refugees. He travelled in 2015 to the Calais refugee camp, the Jungle, in northern France, to research and shoot the film, *The Crossing*, with the use of refugee testimonials and actors. Describing it as 'a film told from the refugees perspective. There is no them. There is only us', *The Crossing* relays a blend of documentary and fictionalised footage that does not seek to Other the refugee.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Stefano Liberti, 'Il Sistema di Accoglienza dei Migranti in Italia è come una Cipolla', *Internazionale online*, 2016, <http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/stefano-liberti/2016/05/12/accoglienza-migranti-italia-cipolla>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-crossing-a-refugee-story-film-freedom#/> Crowdfunded, half of the film profits raised were donated to charities to help refugees.

With a similar intent and purpose is the six-part documentary, *The Journey from Syria* (2016), by Matthew Cassel. The film follows a refugee on his way from Syria to Northern Europe, across Turkey to Greece, and through Eastern Europe to the Netherlands. Here the protagonist, Shalhoub, was joined by the filmmaker, Matthew Cassel, who documented and participated in this journey.<sup>25</sup> Going the other way, *Hamedullah: The Road Home* (2012), tells the story of a young refugee in Britain who was deported back to Afghanistan, and to whom the filmmaker, Sue Clayton, gave a digital camera to film his journey himself. The film was screened at the United Nations in Geneva, and submitted to the Select Committee that seeks to change the law on deporting young people to war zones.<sup>26</sup>

*Clouds over Sidra* (2015) by Chris Milk and Gabo Arora emerged out of a collaboration between UNHCR, Save the Children and Don't Panic London for a 3D Virtual Reality film. The project throws viewers into the Syrian conflict by virtually transporting them into the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, currently home to about 80,000 refugees and growing.<sup>27</sup> The producers' ambition was to use Virtual Reality to create what they described as 'the ultimate empathy machine' - to create something that 'feels like truth', not a window on their world, but an immersion in their world that could enable a deeper connection.<sup>28</sup> As the producer, Chris Milk, claims, 'I think you can change minds with this kind of film'.<sup>29</sup> The film was presented to

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<sup>25</sup> "The Journey" is a six-part documentary published by The New Yorker in collaboration with Field of Vision, <https://youtu.be/NR0uIPXY37g>

<sup>26</sup> [https://youtu.be/Ip3YV\\_UcLSk](https://youtu.be/Ip3YV_UcLSk)

<sup>27</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=176&country=107> A similar VR project, *The Displaced*, was created by Within and The New York Times, with the intention to create a 360 degree VR video of being with displaced children around the world <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecavbpCuvkI>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecavbpCuvkI>

<sup>28</sup> Chris Milk at Ted Talks, 7.35 minute, [https://www.ted.com/talks/chris\\_milk\\_how\\_virtual\\_reality\\_can\\_create\\_the\\_ultimate\\_empathy\\_machine/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_milk_how_virtual_reality_can_create_the_ultimate_empathy_machine/transcript)

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

decision-makers and had advocacy power such that supporters included United Nation Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, and the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, technological affordances have progressively enabled audio-visual accessibility and the redress of mainstream representations. In the late 1960s, for instance, we saw the development of simpler and more portable cameras and sync-sound tape recorders, automatic light meters, and fast film that could be shot in normal light that helped broaden the range of filmic practice. From the 1980s, video cameras, and cable followed by satellite television made film production even more accessible and relatively inexpensive for a wide range of practitioners to adopt and disseminate. In the new millennium, the assembly of aesthetics and methods enabled by the widespread accessibility of digital and smartphone technologies has led to an exponential growth of representations, some of which have gone to challenge dominant mainstream narratives, nationally and transnationally.

Digital storytelling has become common among refugees on their journeys or while residing in host nations for its relatively straightforward way of speaking one's story to the camera. For refugees seeking to reach safe sanctuaries, digital infrastructures and connectivity are as important as the physical infrastructures of roads, railways, sea crossings and the borders controlling the free movement of people.<sup>31</sup> Mobile apps, internet access, translation services,

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXHil1TPxvA>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXHil1TPxvA>; [http://unvr.sdactioncampaign.org/cloudsoversidra/#.Wo\\_m9BPOVn4](http://unvr.sdactioncampaign.org/cloudsoversidra/#.Wo_m9BPOVn4)

<sup>31</sup> On the use of social media in refugee camps, see Katty Alhayek, 'Double Marginalization: The Invisibility of Syrian Refugee Women's Perspectives in Mainstream Online Activism and Global Media', *Feminist Media Studies*, vol 14, no 4, 2014, pp 696-700; Carleen Maitland and Ying Xu 'A Social Informatics Analysis of Refugee Mobile Phone Use: A Case Study of Za'atari Syrian Refugee Camp), *TPRC* 43, 2015, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2588300> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2588300>; Melissa Wall, Madeline Otis Campbell and Dana Janbek (2015) 'Syrian Refugees and Information Precarity', *New Media and Society*, vol 19, no 2, pp. 240-254, 2015.

There are also a few studies that consider the use of social media by migrants. They include 'digital diasporas' and 'long-distance nationalism' that concentrates more on migrant connectivities. See Jennifer M Brinkerhoff, *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational*

messaging and phone calling platforms, social media engagement, and more, are all put to intensive use. Their usage is both instrumental and affective. The smartphone provides access to a range of news and information resources that refugees depend on for their direction and survival, without which they would literally be ‘out at sea’.<sup>32</sup> Refugees themselves share photographs and videos made with their mobile phones on YouTube, social media sites and Facebook groups, often used in an evidential way to share key landmarks and routes with others.<sup>33</sup>

The Facebook project, *Humans of the Refuge*, was made on the format of *Humans of New York*, as a social media space to share photos and human interest stories from the refugees’ perspectives when residing in the US. The site is dominated by photographs and texts by refugees as well as NGOs to counter and supplement mainstream media coverage. Audio-visuals here are mainly in terms of vox pop from people tackling the discrimination that they face while trying to build their lives.<sup>34</sup> Another group on Facebook, RefugeeVoices2015, was started by

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*Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009; Daniele Conversi, ‘Irresponsible Radicalisation: Diasporas, Globalization and Long-Distance Nationalism in the Digital Age’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol 38, no 9, 2012, pp 1357-79.

<sup>32</sup> Marie Gillespie et al, *Mapping Refugee Media Journeys. Smartphone and Social Media Networks*, The Open University and France Médias Monde Research Report, 2016

<sup>33</sup> Additionally, mobile phone usage in politically turbulent contexts has another value as ‘witness media’ in contexts where journalists are barred or not present due to risks to their lives. See, for instance, the documentaries, *Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields* (2011) and *No Fire Zone* (2013) broadcast on Channel Four about the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka that were put together with a substantial amount of mobile phone footage taken from those who were caught up in and displaced due to the military incursions and aerial bombing of civilians and even hospitals in designated ‘no fire zones’. This became extremely important ‘witness media’ in a context where the Sri Lankan government barred journalists from the battleground. See also *Burma VJ – Reporting from a Closed Country* (2008), where video journalist Joshua and his fellow activists-turned-VJs fed CNN, BBC and the rest of the world’s media with exceptional film footage showing the Burmese people’s fight for freedom and the brutality of the military regime. The VJs underwent a tremendous rite of passage, turning from young, spontaneous activists into war-torn veterans of a media revolution, through digital video smuggled through Thailand and the internet.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/notes/humans-of-the-refuge/the-most-memorable-humans-of-the-refuge-stories-of-the-year/927179007330793/>. There is also a short news-like advocacy

*refugees about refugees* as a way to amplify their voice, to provide regular updates of the Calais Jungle, to appreciate volunteers' support and efforts for political changes (as per their description on their online Facebook group).<sup>35</sup> There is also ART in the Jungle – a page dedicated to artists who are active in the Jungle of Calais and environs.<sup>36</sup> Alongside these, are various Refugees Welcome pages hosted in different countries. They are all examples of ongoing transnational visual storytelling that, together with the many NGOs and activist social media and blogs contribute to awareness, advocacy and solidarity from different perspectives.

Nevertheless, there remains a wealth of other audio-visual contributions that have not hit the register as they continue to circulate in subterranean channels, either as documentary footage or as audio-visual fragments of displaced people's nostalgia, desires and ambitions. There is a need to both recognise this footage for what it is, and to develop a means of collaborative cinema as a viable and ethical research and development methodology for Fifth Cinema, a point that we return to below.

With the aforementioned examples, we can see the power of audio-visual-digital media as a tool of advocacy, to create empowering channels for otherwise silenced and distorted voices as the basics for what a Fifth Cinema could look like. They were made with different kinds and degrees of refugees' participation. In some cases, however, there may run the risk of falling into another trap: that of the 'new exotic', the refugee to be feted, fetishized and saved. Another issue is that the refugee's creative agency might be compromised or curtailed, and the work might confer more agency and kudos to the organisation and/or director, the non-refugee filmmaker, who primarily curates the project, and where refugees are not involved in the 'final cut' decisions on footage of their own images.

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clip on MashableUK connected on this facebook site:  
<http://mashable.com/2015/12/14/refugees-us-explained/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/refugeesvoice2015/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ARTintheJungle/>

In comparison, what stand out as truly innovative collaborative projects are the following three film projects that we now focus as prime examples of how we have conceptualised Fifth Cinema.

*Les Sauters (Those who Jump*, Figure 2) started as an idea by filmmakers, Moritz Siebert and Estephan Wagner, and was then developed through the camera and film direction of migrant-turn-filmmaker, Abdou Bakar Sidibè [Figures 3-5]. He worked both behind and in front of the camera to personally document his and countless other African migrants' search for safe haven. 'This is Mount Gugurù – it is hope and despair and life and death', Sidibè says in the film of the mountain that marks the border between Morocco and Spain around the city of Melilla. Throughout the process of filming, Sidibè maintained, it is 'us' filming 'ourselves', rather than 'us' being filmed by the usual broadcaster, filmmaker or researcher. Along with his companions, he engaged very seriously in the production from its beginning to its end.

The film becomes a powerful document and engaging reflection on migrants' protest against recalcitrant borders. Shots of Melilla's streetlights are scattered throughout the film as a meditation with which to gain strength for the next attempt at jumping over the fence that divides Africa from Europe. The camera contrasts their plight by following the aircraft that they can see landing in Spain, spliced with shots of the starkness of everyday living in the camps in the forest on the border. We see them in their search for food, washing in the river, their constant hike to find a new spot to break the border, their dismay when returning to the camp to find it raided and burnt by Moroccan police after a failed crossing, the loss of their companion, phone calls to their family, and the exhilaration of the staged football match between those from the Ivory Coast and Mali.

By relaying their anxieties, resilience and determination as a protest against the injustice of 'a fence' that divide the world, Sidibè portrays the challenges of retaining one's dignity while living in an inhumane and transitory situation. His images of hope and fortitude are contrasted



with images of surveillance and objectification by border police cameras. Switching from CCTV to infrared, instead of three-dimensional human beings, the images reveal dehumanised phantom bodies hurling themselves across fences, and more often than not, failing to get to the other side.<sup>37</sup> While we get the chance to acquaint ourselves with the protagonists, we also get a foreboding sense of the forces that seek to degrade them.

Altogether, the film acts as an effective and evocative audio-visual testimony to ‘why we don’t give up’. Sidibè stated:

‘Filming my life helped me to feel like I existed and that people were interested in hearing our side of the story...I hope that people who watch *Those Who Jump* will get a better understanding of why people risk death for a better life.’<sup>38</sup>

On seeing the film, Estephan Wagner reflected:

‘It was almost a physical experience: through these images we got the impression you could “smell” the place of filming. To us they conveyed a lot of immediacy that would have been impossible for us to achieve.’<sup>39</sup>

The ‘scent’ of Sidibè’s film aesthetic and style in *Les Sauters* is in line with what Marks offers as a theory of ‘haptic visuality’.<sup>40</sup> This is a visceral visuality that triggers embodied memories of smell, touch, and taste. It is one of the newfound ways in which intercultural cinema engages the viewer bodily to convey cultural experience and memory rather than simply

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<sup>37</sup> Mintzer, *Those who Jump (Les Sauters)*. *Berlin Review*

<sup>38</sup> Abou Bakar Sidibè, ‘The Wrong Side of the Fence: A Malian Refugee on Trying to Reach Europe’

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/14/malian-refugee-on-his-journey-to-europe>

<sup>39</sup> Estephan Wagner, *Do We Really Need More Fences Like Melilla?*

<http://www.dfi.dk/service/english/news-and-publications/news/february-2016/les-sauteurs-interview-berlinale-2016.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Sense*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2000.

a visual representation of experience. This ‘intercultural transfer’ is more effective when led by the subjects of the film than by filmmakers parachuting in from outside.<sup>41</sup>

*Ma’a al-Fidda (Silvered Water, Syria Self-Portrait, 2014)* is another film made with the leading contribution of refugees. Syrian director, Ossama Mohammed, was forced into exile after speaking out against the Assad regime in the 2011 uprising [Figure 6]. From his new home in Paris, he began assembling online footage to bear witness to the atrocities inflicted by the regime, and to address his sense of futility in exile:

In Syria, every day, YouTubers film then die; others kill then film. In Paris, driven by my inexhaustible love for Syria, I find that I can only film the sky and edit the footage posted.<sup>42</sup>

Months later after starting the film project, a Kurdish teacher, Wiam Simav Bedirxan, reached out online to Mohammed with the question; ‘If your camera was here in Homs, what would you be filming?’ She started to collect footage of everyday life in bomb-torn Homs through a hidden camera. *Ma’a al-Fidda* is a testimony to their remarkable collaboration.

Footage from Bedirxan’s camera, providing raw and visceral insights into life, death and devastation in a city under siege, is woven with footage found online compiled and crafted by Mohammed in Paris [Figure 7-8]. The film ricochets between disturbing imagery of violence in a war that has left about half a million dead and more than eleven million homeless, and a highly reflective cinematic elegy of film-making and the relationship between the two in dramatically different locales. The filmmakers even acknowledge the vanity of the film project while revealing self-reflexive tensions in their radically contrasting settings.<sup>43</sup> He asks ‘what is

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<sup>41</sup> See Stefan Manz and Panikos Panayi, *Refugees and Cultural Transfer to Britain*, Routledge, London, 2013

<sup>42</sup> Oussama Mohamed cited in <https://www.torchfilms.com/products/silvered-water-syria-self-portrait>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU2yAKphDD0>

cinema? aesthetic?’ and she responds to his lofty questions in frustrated despair, ‘I’ve had enough of making your film’.<sup>44</sup>

The film is at once a momentous document of the Syrian civil war captured by its victims and its perpetrators – as explained in the film caption, it is shot by ‘1,001’ ordinary Syrians – and it is a haunting testament to human courage and dignity in the face of adversity.<sup>45</sup> With the completed film, Bedirxan was rightly recognised as co-director with Mohamed and, once able to escape from Syria, introduced with him at film festivals.

The example serves to illustrate how ambiguous, blurred and transitory the boundaries may become for Fifth Cinema entitlement. Refugee filmmakers might have attained asylum in a relatively more privileged manner (by aeroplane and visa as opposed to travel overland or by sea). They might have class privilege, financial stability and even be previously trained in making films. They might well become what we term, ‘refugee gatekeepers’. But in this case, the Paris-based filmmaker attempted to tackle these issues by closely collaborating with those stuck in war zones without undermining their right for self-representation.

Another innovative project that epitomises the radical space of Fifth Cinema is the film/campaign, *Io sto con la Sposa (On the Bride’s Side, 2014)*, a film made by a group of filmmaker-activists and refugees who, from November 14-18, 2013, crossed the borders from Italy to Sweden, disguised as a wedding procession [Figures 10-14]. A Palestinian poet and an Italian journalist had met five Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Milan who had entered Europe via the Italian island of Lampedusa. The poet and journalist decide to help them complete their journey to Sweden, even though this was at the risk of being arrested as ‘traffickers’, as go legislative damnations. With a Palestinian friend dressed up as the bride and a dozen or so

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

<sup>45</sup> Torch Films production official synopsis online:  
<https://www.torchfilms.com/products/silvered-water-syria-self-portrait>

Italian and Syrian friends as wedding guests, the troupe took a four day journey across Europe covering about three thousand kilometres. This vivid film highlights the experiences, hopes and dreams of the five Palestinian and Syrian refugees along with their interactions with their companions-in-arms. It also reveals an unknown side of Europe – ‘a transnational, supportive and irreverent Europe that ridicules the laws and restrictions of the Fortress’, particularly, the Dublin convention for asylum-seekers that stipulates refugees must register in the first country that they reach in Europe.<sup>46</sup>

In reality as in celluloid, the team produce a ‘masquerade’ based on their direct filming of events on the road from Milan to Stockholm. The protest against the fence is to the tune of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque.<sup>47</sup> In the words of the filmmakers:

‘A documentary and yet a political act, a real and yet fantastic story; *On the Bride's Side* is all these things at once....The filming, therefore, always had to adapt to the needs of the political act, because we really had to get to Sweden – it wasn't just for the film. And we had to get there as quickly as possible. This obviously set an extremely demanding work rate: twelve hours a day in the car, scenes to shoot, files to download and, if we were lucky, three hours sleep a night... The fact that we were sharing a great risk and a great dream inevitably united us. And this experience also changed our way of seeing things and helped us in the search for a new perception of the border – for a language, which, without falling into the trap of victimism, was able to transform the monsters of our fears into the heroes of our dreams, the ugly into the beautiful and numbers into names.’<sup>48</sup>

Without falling into ‘the trap of victimism’, the project produced an urgent and yet ingenious provocation that also aided the refugees on the move. It is symptomatic of the vast reservoir of creativity that refugees and their allies can resort to in their movement from danger to safety, precarity to a transitory space of stability.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.iostoconlasposa.com/en/>

<sup>47</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.iostoconlasposa.com/en/#directors-notes>. One of the filmmakers, Gabriele Del Grande, was recently arrested and detained for 14 days in April 2017 whilst in Turkey developing a documentary on refugees at the border with Syria.

## II

### Three to Five

As we have already indicated, the fifth genus is in the footsteps of the advent of Third Cinema as a collective force for the formerly colonised. Otherwise called an ‘imperfect cinema’, ‘cinema of subversion,’ ‘cinema of resistance’, or a ‘revolutionary cinema’, Third Cinema protagonists sought to dismantle the Eurocentric premises and Hollywood commercialisation of international film.<sup>49</sup> Diverging from the individualist auteur style of arthouse cinema, or Second Cinema, their attack was mainly against the bourgeois, pacifying, racist and heteronormative agendas of First Cinema epitomised by Hollywood.

From the 1960s, filmmakers in newly independent countries throughout the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America attempted to challenge hegemonic power structures with the audio-visual equipment that became available to them. Their aim was to redress the distorted representations of colonial nation-bounded cinema, and to tell stories from the perspective of liberated independent countries and peoples, beyond the ideology of the colonisers or of the imperial neo-colonial hegemonic cinema industry. Their legacy is visible in films produced to this day in the global south as well as by diaspora populations now located within the ‘First World’ and in organisations using the power of media for campaigns of social justice.<sup>50</sup> By incorporating cultural and political critiques and challenging viewers with new compositional

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<sup>49</sup> See Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, ‘Towards a Third Cinema’ in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, Bill Nichols, ed, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976; Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake, *Rethinking Third Cinema*, Routledge, London, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> See and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*; Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen, *Questions of Third Cinema*, London, British Film Institute, 1991; Guneratne and Dissanayake, *Rethinking Third Cinema*

structures and genre juxtaposition, Third Cinema harnessed the power of film to increase public consciousness about issues of power, nationhood, identity, and oppression around the world.<sup>51</sup>

Just as importantly, Fifth Cinema follows yet diverges from Fourth Cinema, otherwise known as indigenous cinema or, as Faye Ginsburg terms it, 'ethnographic media' – media produced by indigenous people who are invariably marginalised and oppressed in the nations in which they reside.<sup>52</sup> The remit of Fourth Cinema was again to repel the dominance of Eurocentric media so as indigenous cultures and identities are represented by the social actors themselves.<sup>53</sup> Barry Barclay elaborates: 'First, Second and Third cinema are all cinemas of the modern Nation State - from the indigenous place of standing, these are all invader cinemas'.<sup>54</sup> In comparison, Fifth Cinema is less fixated on the virtues of land and originary nation. It is by compulsion, nomadic and deterritorialized. Unlike Fourth Cinema whose main point of orientation is like the trunk of an ancient tree, longitudinally based on First Nation entitlements and ancestral continuities, Fifth Cinema is displaced, branch-like, rhizomatic and latitudinal as borders are transgressed and new homes, bearings and identities are sought.<sup>55</sup> Fifth Cinema is not hemmed in by specific sedentarised nation-state ideologies; rather it navigates a scattering of nation-state boundaries. Nor is it necessarily defined by identitarian politics rooted by heritage. It is a cinema of necessity defined by an inherent precarity, memories and restlessness in

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<sup>51</sup> Kim Dodge, 'What is Third Cinema?', *Third (World) Cinema*, 2007, <http://thirdcinema.blueskylimit.com/thirdcinema.html>

<sup>52</sup> See Barry Barclay, *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*, *Illusions. New Zealand Moving Image and Performing Arts Criticism*, 35, Winter 2003; Faye Ginsburg, 'Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media' in Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin, eds, *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. California University Press, California, 2002

<sup>53</sup> Faye Ginsburg, 'The Parallax Effect: The Impact of Aboriginal Media on Ethnographic Film', *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol 11, no 2, 1995, pp 64–76

<sup>54</sup> Barclay, 'Celebrating Fourth Cinema', op cit, p 7

<sup>55</sup> Our use of this metaphor borrows from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of arborescent and rhizomatic, even though our interpretation of the arborescent is very different from theirs, which specified dominant and relatively static political formations. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993

between homes imagined as elsewhere, past, present and future. It is, as Laurent Berlant notes with reference to 'contemporary social precariousness' in general, another 'cinema of precarity'.<sup>56</sup>

More broadly, Fifth Cinema complements the genre of what Hamid Naficy defines as 'accented cinema' - that is, the film-making of postcolonial, Third World, and other displaced individuals living in the West, whereby their films are marked by a certain 'accent' through alternative production modes and styles.<sup>57</sup> These changes resonate with what Ella Shohat and Robert Stam describe as 'a polycentric visual culture' approach, whereby the global relationalities of artistic production and reception have been re-negotiated and 'art is born between individuals and cultures in the process of dialogic interaction'.<sup>58</sup>

Although the experience of expatriation varies greatly from one person to the next, the composite of audio-visual outputs that might qualify for Fifth Cinema exhibits certain stylistic similarities as an 'accented cinema'. These accents range from their open- and closed-form aesthetics to their memory-driven multilingual narratives, and from their emphasis on political agency to their concern with identity and its transgression.<sup>59</sup> It is an emerging genre that while producing new kinds of representations, often requires new sets of viewing skills on the part of audiences.

Treating creativity as a social practice, Naficy demonstrates that diasporic films are in dialogue not only with the home and host societies, but also with audiences, many of whom are also situated astride mainstream cultures, and whose desires and fears the filmmakers wish to tackle. Films by migrants or refugees question identity formations, address displacement,

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<sup>56</sup> Laurent Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2001, p 7

<sup>57</sup> Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001, p 11

<sup>58</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'Narrativizing Visual Culture. Towards a Polycentric Aesthetics', pp.55-56, in Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Visual Culture Reader*, Psychology Press, 2002, p. 56

<sup>59</sup> *ibid* p 23.

challenge national and ethnocentric myths, and revisit and revise conventional historical narratives and received wisdoms. Such outputs have slowly but surely transformed Euro-American cinema over the last thirty years as a result of the increased visibility of filmmakers with migrant backgrounds and a growing interest in the facets and dynamics of postmodern cultural diversity.<sup>60</sup>

Richardo Peach has a parallel argument for Fifth Cinema that, according to him, includes ‘Feminist Cinema, Queer Cinema and Immigrant/Multicultural Cinema [that] deals with the oppressions which cultures engage within their own cultural boundaries.’ By countering what he describes as ‘internal cultural colonisation’, Fifth Cinema contributes to a heterognosis – that is, ‘the existence in one space and time of different mutually exclusive, opposing and sometimes incommensurable ideologies and representations’.<sup>61</sup>

Where we depart from this parallel in the fifth genus, however, is, first, to note the protagonists’ relative privilege when compared to stateless people, and, second, the technological affordance that enables audio-visual production by displaced people in the current era. Diasporic or Fifth Cinema as proposed by Peach, is not based on the precarity of the protagonists to the same extent as the stateless. While relaying oppressed stories, feminist, queer and diasporic cinema is a product of, albeit a different accent on, national cinemas. On the basis of citizen entitlement, the heterogeneity and hybridity of society is emphasised, a phenomenon that is attaining more and more acceptability. Nation-state parameters remain under-examined. They also have the potential to avail of the dynamics and distribution networks of production in the region. While also accented, Fifth Cinema as advanced here is a cinema of images without bounded or grounded representations, nor a ready entitlement to avail of established industries

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<sup>60</sup> Berghan and Sternberg, *European Cinema in Motion*

<sup>61</sup> Ricardo Peach, *Queer Cinema as a Fifth Cinema in South Africa and Australia*, Phd, University of Sydney, 2005, p 327 and p 48.



and distribution networks.<sup>62</sup> It is primarily a subaltern and transgressive cinema that disturbs on several registers.

Such observations are in line with Trinh T Minh-ha's notion of 'refugeeism' - a product of 'border wars' that reflects 'a profound crisis of major powers', an urgent and passionate political issue of our day that requires unwavering commitment.<sup>63</sup> To act on the issue of refugeeism is, as she argues, 'to develop the ability to receive with more than one's eyes or ears'.<sup>64</sup> She foregrounds aesthetics by emphasising 'the arts' in political theory:

'as complex inductive tools that help us think, make sense of and conceive the world and the political... Art helps us slow down and take note of the in-betweenness that results in any given encounter...the task at hand is that of learning the art of "speak[ing] nearby or together" (not about or for) political problems and the subjects entangled in them in our own practices.'<sup>65</sup>

With regards to Fifth Cinema, the aesthetic is not just about a meditation on the representative field of the media. Rather, it is necessarily moored by the politics and ethics of making the film, and in terms of considering where the film will circulate and to what ends. We call this an 'open poethic' approach – that is to say, political intentions do not so much as prescribe the final look of the film but address the basis by which the look emerged and to what ends in terms of their advocacy potential. Fifth Cinema is therefore bookended by political urgencies, whereas within its audio-visual-digital parameters, it might convey a multitude of relations between aesthetics and politics in the discursive sense of 'in-betweenness that results in any given encounter' – that encounter being between people, cultures, histories and political

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<sup>62</sup> On the concepts deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*. Viking, London, 1977 and their *A Thousand Plateaus*

<sup>63</sup> Minha, *Elsewhere, Within Here*, op cit, p 46

<sup>64</sup> ibid

<sup>65</sup> Minh-ha cited in Shinhyung Choi, Aesthetic Interrogation of Refugeeism, Migration and a Post-September 11 World by Trinh Minh-ha, 11, 2011, <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2011/12/16/aesthetic-interrogation-of-refugeeism-migration-and-a-post-september-11-world/>

worldviews.<sup>66</sup> This politicised aesthetic could be in the register of agitated movement, hybridity, multilinguality, haptic visuality, new philosophies, jarring discrepancy, the carnivalesque and all-embracing affect. The main provisor is that binaries such as self and other, subject and object, deserving and undeserving are tackled and effaced to the extents possible. In the process, emphasis need be placed on refugee creative agency. The role of those who are relatively privileged to have residential status is to step back in the shadows: not as representators, nor even as facilitators who confer agency to themselves, but as ones who can enable and speak nearby or together in the struggle for refugee self-representation. As Demos maintains, ‘Arts hold the potential to reorganise the realm of visibility so that representation is more equal.’<sup>67</sup> But as we now go on to elaborate, equality in terms of a realm of visibility need also take on board the realm of productive agency.

### **From Shared to Self-Generated**

Our proposal owes an added debt to the history of ethnographic film-making. From the 1950s, Jean Rouch’s ‘shared anthropology’ had already entailed the involvement of West African subjects in the production of his films, whether it be at the planning, filming or editorial stages.<sup>68</sup> The participatory method arose from the intent to hand over the tools of representation, and to redress the balance of authorship and control in the production (and dissemination) of the images. Senegalese filmmaker, producer and writer, Sembene Ousmane was wont to remind the ethnographic filmmaker, ‘you look at us as if we are insects.’<sup>69</sup> Learning his lessons, Rouch

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<sup>66</sup> On the liminal space of the ‘in-between’ as it applies to the negotiation of identities across race, class, gender and cultural traditions, see Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, New York, Routledge, 1994. As we detail below, we concur with his assertion, ‘Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively’, p 2

<sup>67</sup> See Jacir’s experimental documentary on Palestinians, photographic and video based exposure of statelessness as a political act, pp 103-123, and Shibli’s photographic strategy of correlating visual absence with political dispossession, challenging an ‘aesthetic of erasure’, op.cit., pp 124-143, in TJ Demos, *Migrant Image*

<sup>68</sup> See Paul Henley, *Adventures of the Reel: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2010

<sup>69</sup> Albert Cervoni, ‘A Historic Confrontation in 1965 between Jean Rouch and Sembène Ousmane: ‘You look at Us as if We are Insects’’, in Annet Busch and Max Annas, eds, *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2008, p 3

himself began to advocate for African countries to have the freedom and opportunities for making their own film productions and to set up their independent cinema industries so as to be able to represent and transmit their own stories, memories and heritage.

Other anthropologists/filmmakers/producers have themselves developed participatory ethnographic film with the idea of ‘handing over the camera’ to previously documented subjects – from Sol Worth and John Adair’s pioneering *Navajo Project* (1972) to Terence Turner (1990), Vincent Carelli (1986), Eric Michaels (1986) and indigenous cinema produced by Aboriginal Australians and Inuit filmmakers – documented by Ginsburg as cultural activism against their objectification.<sup>70</sup>

In the 1970s, David McDougall too wrote about the idea of ‘participatory cinema’ as ‘one of collaboration and joint authorship between filmmakers and their subjects’.<sup>71</sup> In this interaction, anthropological practice is developed from a more personal and horizontal perspective framed by shared experiences. It is a shift from an ‘objective’ and positivist approach – aimed basically at ‘representing’ the cultural ‘other’ – to encompassing more subjective experiences. Such approaches advocated by postmodernist currents, suppose the rendering of multiple subjective voices that have value in and of themselves independent of the author’s (or anthropologist’s) interpretation. Here, as Carlos Y Flores puts it, a more shared and horizontal interaction with the

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<sup>70</sup> Sol Worth and John Adair, *Through Navajo Eyes*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1972; Terence Turner, ‘Visual Media, Cultural Politics and Anthropological Practice: Some Implications of Recent Uses of Film and Video among the Kayapo of Brazil’, *Commission of Visual Anthropology Review*, 1990, pp 8-13; Vincent Carelli, *Videos nas Aldeias project*, 1987, <http://www.videonasaldeias.org.br/2009/realizadores.php?c=53&>; Eric Michaels *Aboriginal Invention of Television: Central Australia 1982-1986*, Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1986; Faye Ginsburg, ‘Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media’ in Ginsburg et al, *Media Worlds*

<sup>71</sup> David McDougall, *Transcultural Cinema*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1998, p 136.

subject's conceptual universe'.<sup>72</sup> It endorses George Marcus and James Clifford's observations that 'every version of an "other" wherever found, is also the construction of a "self"'.<sup>73</sup>

Contemporary visual anthropological projects now entail a diverse number of approaches.<sup>74</sup>

As Marcus Banks summarises, they are:

'making visual representations (studying society by producing images)...examining pre-existing visual representations (studying images for information about society), and...collaborating with social actors in the production of visual representations.'<sup>75</sup>

It is the latter that is of most interest to this article's remit. Learning from and further developing Rouch's role for African cinema and other visual anthropologists' support for indigenous cinemas, our task is how to recognise and enable possibilities for refugee self-representation and/or a truly participatory film-making where refugees can reclaim the right to represent themselves and, in the process, are demonstrably creative contributors to socio-cultural life. The challenge then is, how can an ethically informed approach and aesthetic be self-generated and developed nearby or together? How can visual or witnessed stories be effectively produced and used for wider dissemination and advocacy without compromising refugee agency, position and safety, to lobby policy makers, and inform (I)NGO work and further engagement in the field? How can creative and solidarity networks be formed for lone social actors in the field?

## **A Prolegomenon/Programme for Fifth Cinema**

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<sup>72</sup> Carlos Y Flores, 'Sharing Anthropology: Collaborative Video Experiences among Maya Film-makers in Post-war Guatemala' in Sarah Pink, ed, *Visual Interventions. Applied Visual Anthropology*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2007

<sup>73</sup> James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986

<sup>74</sup> See Sarah Pink, ed, *Visual Interventions. Applied Visual Anthropology*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2007

<sup>75</sup> Marcus Banks, 'Visual Research Methods', *Social Research Update*, 1995, p 11

We argue that ‘who’ represents ‘whom’, ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘for whom,’ has implications for the ‘what’ that is represented.<sup>76</sup> The representations, as well as the effects of such an approach on the subjects portrayed and the discourses that emerge around them, we maintain, is intrinsically linked to the modes of production, distribution and audience reception of the cultural products created. What to shoot and include, how to shoot, what topic, where, who, why would then emerge out of the collective pre-production phase managed by and with the refugees; agreement upon content would then be finalised by all actors – in this case, with refugees in the lead with their host groups, peer researchers and filmmakers.

Ethical criteria need be implicit to the way in which a film is shot, or what happens with the material during and after the shooting takes place so as refugee identity is anonymised and protected where it needs to be. Necessarily, these codes of practice need be generated in situ with those involved. The project may engage refugees directly about the different issues and challenges that they face throughout their journeys, through meeting them at identified hubs such as camps, refugee shelters and asylum seeker centres. It might entail participants who share their footage, experiences, to tell their own stories, whether it be of escape and departure, expectations, dreams, anxieties, anger, hopes, despair, difficulties. It might involve the establishment of skills-sharing, support and artistic development, decisions made together on how to disseminate the material collected, and how to present it to the various media outlets, (I)NGOs, governments among other venues for direct advocacy and political engagement. It is also to ensure that what they reveal does not hamper, hinder or expose refugees to any dangers or problems.<sup>77</sup> This could be by way of developing collaborative practice on the go, or by

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<sup>76</sup> See Mariagiulia Grassilli, ‘Anthropology and Cinema: Visual Representations of Human Rights, Displacement and Resistance in *Come Back Africa* by Lionel Rogosin’, *Journal of Visual Anthropology*, 2007, vol 20, no 2/3, p 222

<sup>77</sup> See Eileen Pittaway, Linda Bartolomei and Richard Hugman, “‘Stop Stealing Our Stories’: The Ethics of Research with Vulnerable Groups”, *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 2010, vol 2, no 2, pp 229-251

considering more effective representations as with a focus on the environment, objects, unidentifiable people, fictional stories, creative reenactments of their experiences as with ethnofiction, and the use of pseudonyms for any film and/or research acknowledgements.<sup>78</sup> Such considered approaches would make it possible to construct ethically and politically sensitive relationships throughout the research and development.<sup>79</sup> With an ‘open poethic’ approach, film aesthetics and styles need not be prescribed for they would be generated by the crucible of ideas, skills exchanges, intercultural knowledge transfers and due consideration of filmic outlets.

As a fitting example, Catherine Donaldson’s film current work with asylum-seekers in south England comes out of ethical practice suited to the temporal and spatial contexts. Narratives and experiences are explored in the form of what she calls an ‘ethno-production’.<sup>80</sup> Creative workshops with them lead to the formation of a script, shot and acted out by others for a film. In contrast to Rouch’s ethno-fiction, the refugees’ identities remain protected for fear that the film might compromise their case. This is the approach that seems most sensitive to those who are waiting to hear about their status to stay in Britain from the asylum-seeking process, while also presenting an anonymised outlet for expressing their fears and frustrations as ‘prisoners of complacency’ in among the barbed wires of the nation-state.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the circulation and production of films and social media projects, other extant footage, audiovisual material and refugee stories need be identified, collated and analysed. This is part of our larger undertaking to develop a go-to digital space for Fifth Cinema. While online resources can usurp myopic, nation-bound, mainstream narratives, they can also serve another,

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<sup>78</sup> On ethnofiction, see Peter Loizos, *Innovation in Ethnographic Film: From Innocence to Self-Consciousness 1955-1985*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993; Johannes Sjöberg, ‘Ethnofiction: drama as a creative research practice in ethnographic film’, *Journal of Media Practice*, 2008, vol 9, no 3, pp 229-242

<sup>79</sup> Catriona Mackenzie, Christopher McDowell and Eileen Pittaway, ‘Beyond “do no Harm”: The Challenge of Constructing Ethical Relationships in Refugee Research’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol 20, no 2, pp 299-319

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.eggplant12.com/about-1/>

<sup>81</sup> Tom Southerden (2018) ‘Prisoners of Complacency’, *Amnesty*, no 196, pp 12-14

admittedly, utopian purpose. When nation-states are closed, ‘web-states’ are relatively open. When homes cannot be created, there remains a place that has the potential to defy national borders and this is the rhizomatic state online, a cyber-sanctuary.<sup>82</sup> When realities are harsh and treacherous, the sharing of experiences, aspirations and utopias become even more important in the effort to strive on amidst a geographic and political wilderness of innumerable hurdles.

### **(Y)Our Call**

While we sum up, we also look forwards. We have identified Fifth Cinema as having four essential features – the ethics and politics of its production, its representational significance, its potential in terms of skills sharing, intercultural knowledge exchange and advocacy, and the need for further collaborative research and/or audio-visual projects. The cinema is enabled by new and accessible technologies that means dissemination may range from film in the conventional sense to social media in the millennial multi-media sense. The genus may be heterogenous, dispersed, fragmentary and eclipsed. The films may be characterised by a multitude of hybrid and transient methods, styles, and aesthetics. But importantly, their productions need be ethically informed in terms of how refugees participate in the project, due recognition of their creative agency, and thinking through the representative ramifications and potentials of the media.

In such a way, Fifth Cinema can serve as a platform for a louder, collective voice for refugee recognition. Its mode of distribution may be irregular and ephemeral, but its aim remains to amplify and penetrate mainstream bastions and usurp hegemonic understandings of their lives. The unifying goal is to seek cultural and political rights for representation outside of mainstream portrayals of refugees as pathologically passive, threat and/or criminal and, conversely, its

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<sup>82</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

obverse as short-term glorified heroes/ines for a day. If we can begin to alter public consensus on refugees, this will hopefully shape government and intergovernmental policy and practice.

Fifth Cinema may serve as an umbrella term, but like the refugee concept, it cannot be contained nor capture the exteriority of media method and aesthetic in a water-tight sense. Nevertheless, it provides a much needed and useful conceptual, methodological, ethical and political space with which to consolidate the media works by and for people forcibly on the move – those with only provisional residence in other countries, and with limited rights and access to the essentials of life and work opportunities. Despite their liminal status, Fifth Cinema seeks to channel the energies and creativity of refugees as active contributors to the societies in which they live and through which they pass. The term is intended as part of a statement of due recognition – that refugee conditions and contributions are appreciated, valorised and supported with the means to represent themselves, creatively, interculturally, and politically through the (co-)production of their own stories. What we are advocating is the generation of what we have called the ‘open poethics’ of Fifth Cinema.